

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A server appliance configured for use in a data processing network, comprising:

an application program suitable for issuing and receiving console transactions;

an operating system configured to direct console transactions issued and received by the application program through a serial port;

a snooping unit configured to capture the console transaction directed through the serial port and modify the transactions according to a network protocol; and

a network interface card connecting the server appliance to a network and configured to transmit the modified transactions over the network.

2. The server appliance of claim 1, wherein the network protocol comprises an IP protocol.

3. The server appliance of claim 1, wherein the modification of console transactions by the network interface card includes appending an internet address to the transaction.

4. The server appliance of claim 3, wherein the internet address represents the internet address of a console server connected to the network.

5. The server appliance of claim 4, wherein the Internet address of the console server is provided to the server appliance as a boot parameter.

6. The server appliance of claim 5, wherein the boot parameter is provided to the server appliance during a DHCP supported boot process.

7. A data processing system, comprising:

at least one server appliance connected to a network, the server appliance including an operating system configured to direct console transactions issued by the server appliance to a serial port and a network interface card configured to capture console transactions directed through the serial port, modify the captured transactions according to a network protocol, and transmit the modified transactions over the network as a network packet; and

a console server connected to the network, wherein the console server includes a network interface card configured to receive the network packets, an emulator including a network portion configured to process network protocol information of the modified transaction and to a serial portion configured to interpret the console transaction contained in the modified transaction, and console devices including a keyboard, mouse, and display terminal configured to communicate console transactions with the emulator.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the network portion of the emulator is Telnet compliant.

9. The system of claim 7, wherein the emulator is enabled to interpret the serial protocol used by the server appliance to communicate with its serial port.

10. The system of claim 7, further comprising a second server appliance connected to the network and configured to modify console transactions issued to a serial port of the second server appliance and to transmit the modified transactions to the console server.

11. The system of claim 7, wherein the network protocol comprises an IP protocol.

12. The system of claim 7, wherein the modification of console transactions by the network interface card includes appending an internet address to the transaction.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the internet address represents the internet address of a console server connected to the network.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the internet address of the console server is provided to the server appliance as a boot parameter.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the boot parameter is provided to the server appliance during a DHCP supported boot process.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the emulator is configured to display a first window for displaying console transactions occurring between the first server appliance and the console sever and a second window for displaying console transactions occurring between the second server appliance and the console sever.

17. A console server suitable for use in a data processing network, comprising:

console devices including a keyboard, mouse, and video terminal;

an operating system configured to communicate with the console devices;

a network interface card connecting the console server to a network; and

an emulator configured to communicate with the console devices via the operating system, wherein the emulator includes a serial portion configured to interpret a serial protocol used by a server appliance connected to the network to communicate with its serial port and further wherein the emulator includes a network portion configured to enable the console server to communicate with the server appliance via the network interface card using a network protocol.

18. The server of claim 17, wherein the emulator is configured to present multiple windows to the video terminal, wherein each window represents a console session with a corresponding server appliance connected to the network.

19. The server of claim 17, wherein the network protocol complies with the Internet Protocol (IP).

20. The server of claim 17, wherein the network portion of the console server is compliant with
5 the Telnet specification.